

WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT QUALITY ACCREDITATION

Why does Quality matter?

The quality of care that a child receives in the early years has a **life-long effect** on intellectual, social, emotional and physical development. Choosing child care may be one of the most important and challenging parenting decisions that you will make.

When, where, how much?

As a parent you should think about more than location, cost and operating hours when choosing a child care program for your child.

In a quality program, the child care areas should be comfortable and provide interesting learning materials for your child. The staff should be warm and friendly, to you and your child helping you both feel good about leaving your child in their care. The playground should be a safe and creative place to play.

I thought all programs were accredited.

Quality Accreditation is a **voluntary** system for all child care programs in Arkansas that has been available since 1993. About 20% of all licensed programs have earned the Quality Accreditation status.

These programs have made a **commitment** to provide quality care, nurturing attention, and appropriate educational experiences that are so important for the development of each child.

You mean that accreditation is not the same as “licensed”?

All child care programs must be licensed by the Department of Human Services. Quality Accredited programs have chosen to meet substantially **higher standards** than are required for licensing.

Quality Accreditation requires an evaluation of the program by an expert in early childhood education.

Will Quality Accreditation make a difference for my child?

Here's what we know about children who attend high-quality child care and preschools:

- more eager to learn
- relate better to their teachers and peers
- more likely to receive assessments of developmental milestones and additional help in areas needed
- are better prepared to adjust to kindergarten and school.

What should I see in a Quality Accredited program?

- ✓ Comfortable space and furnishings that encourage children to explore and learn
- ✓ A wide variety of toys, games, and books that help children develop in all areas
- ✓ Interesting pictures, posters, and children's art work displayed
- ✓ High standards for health, safety, and nutrition for children
- ✓ Children engaged in conversation throughout the day
- ✓ Many opportunities for creative art, music, and pretend play
- ✓ Specially trained adults who are warm and loving; who respect children and appreciate individual differences
- ✓ Frequent, effective communication with parents
- ✓ Positive guidance techniques that help children learn appropriate behaviors and self-control

What does this mean for my family?

Families who enjoy stable, high-quality child care have better work attendance, are better able to concentrate on the job, and have fewer stress-related health problems.

Parents also may be eligible to receive a refundable tax credit on their state income taxes if an accredited child care program is used.

How do I find an accredited program?

For information on how to find an accredited program or for a **listing of accredited programs** in Arkansas: Call 1-800-455-3316 or visit our website www.arkansas.gov/childcare

If your program is not accredited, ask the question “Why is the program not accredited?”